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ABSTRACT

This article assesses the effectiveness of student retention in the community college system, using as an example, the Extended Opportunities Programs and Services (EOP&S) program, which is available at all 106 California community colleges. EOP&S provides activities that have proven to enhance persistence and academic achievements for 80,000 low income, educationally disadvantaged students enrolled in the program. This document discusses the community college environment; retention research and persistence models; EOP&S progress toward student integration and involvement; definitions; and student performance. Results of current EOP&S research indicate significant levels of persistence with high-risk community college populations. Statewide data reveals the following performance trends: (1) EOP&S students had a four year average persistence rate of 82.64% from 1993 to 1997, in contrast to a 53.95% persistence rate for Non-EOP&S students who were enrolled full time the first ten days of instruction during the four Fall terms; and (2) The EOP&S students yielded an average GPA of 2.0 or greater for 78.6% of the students served in contrast to 81% for non-EOP&S students. These results support Tinto's theory that the more students are involved in the college environment, the more they positive their experiences. Table 1 and charts 1-4 indicate statewide persistence data for fall and spring enrollments. (Contains 91 references.) (AS)

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Extended Opportunity Programs and Services For Community College Retention

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By

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Extended Opportunity Programs and Services For Community College Retention

Introduction

The need for effective retention strategies has come to be one of the most important elements of institutional educational success that continues to haunt the hollowed halls of higher education institutions. As the new college applicant pool becomes more diverse, the current traditional student support service program activities remain limited in their effectiveness. The main concern today is the reality that, as community college attrition rates are expected to rise with the changing demographics the success rate of community colleges may be destined toward a continued downward spiral. In other words, successful community college retention activities and programs need to be identified and qualified for future use and reference in response to projected changes in enrollment trends of the new millenium.

"Colleges, which for the most part are structured for white traditional student populations need to be concerned not only with what students do to get involved, but with what institutions can do to promote involvement" (Rendon 1993, p. 17). In addition Pascarella and Terenzini (1998) believe that, "higher education practitioners and policymakers cannot afford to spend another decade in ignorance of the educational influence of a set of institutions that educate nearly 40 percent of our students, namely our community colleges" (p. 157). According to Nora (1993), "more than half of the Hispanic student population attending college enter at two-year institutions and nearly half of all African American students are enrolled in community colleges" (p. 213).

Statement of the Problem

With all the variety of missions that are placed upon the operational functions of the community college segment, the general public continues to demand a better return for the higher educational dollars that are spent. Effective college student retention is the key to the accomplishment of any element of significant success for community college institutions. This endeavor becomes a major effort and dilemma for the community college academy because little is known about two-year higher education institutions achievements toward limiting attrition. The true reality of the situation is the fact that the vast majority of past research concerning college student retention and persistence has concentrated mainly on four-year institutions. Pascarella & Terenzini (1998) believe that, community colleges are major players in the national system of Postsecondary education, but with a few notable exceptions in the literature, little is known about their impacts on students. More specifically, Pascarella & Terenzini (1998) state that, "four of every ten American college students are enrolled in community colleges, it would be a very liberal estimate to say that even 5 percent of the studies reviewed for 'How College Affects Students' focused on community college students" (p. 155).

The Purpose of the Study

The question to be asked here is, where in the world can the community college academy find appropriate working retention and persistence models to emulate or study? According to California statewide data viewed from a simplistic form of trend analysis the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services program (EOP&S) provides significant evidence that it's program activities enhanced persistence and academic achievements for community college students enrolled in the special program.

The EOP&S program has been around since 1970 beginning with 43 campuses and now today serving all 106 community college campuses through out the state of California. More specifically, the California Community College's Extended Opportunity Programs

and Services (EOP&S) provides low income, educationally disadvantaged students with a variety of support services much like those of the federally funded Student Support Services (SSS) programs around the nation. In comparison to the 165,000 students served by Federally funded Student Support Services, the 106 EOP&S programs serve some 80,000 California Community College low-income educationally disadvantaged students annually.

The higher education academy continually strives to maintain the importance of adapting the college environment to be more supportive, and to be inclusive of at-risk disadvantaged minority students with little resolve. However, a review of EOP&S program outcomes and a trend analysis of specific EOP&S program achievements may lead to the identification of real solutions to the problems associated with the roots of community college attrition and illuminate new possibilities of higher persistence for special populations and traditional students.

The Community College Environment

The basic differences in the community college institutional structure and the traditional four year college atmosphere is the interaction associated with an academic community based upon an college hour or campus commons; the dormitories; and a daily collegiate environment were students are expected to be on campus for several hours a day. In comparison Community colleges provide limited interaction with an academic community as most students in urban areas are working and come to campus only at class time and/or for limited student services, then they leave (Tinto 1998). These subtle differences become more important as the population trends for higher education reveals a movement toward increased community college enrollments of non-traditional student populations and the realities of persistence theories. For example, Tinto (1998) believes that academic and social involvement, appears differently in different educational settings and thus influence different students in different ways.

Opps & Smith (1995) believe that as minority students become a larger proportion of the pool of high school graduates, finding ways to increase their recruitment is becoming an increasingly important concern in higher education (p.2). More over, the future of our nation is inextricably tied to an educated population that can contribute to the labor force and the economy, as well as to our national well being. If one-third of the nation will be composed of minority persons by the year 2010, as the demographers predict, minority citizens must be included in the economic, political, social, and educational mainstream (American Council on education, 1989).

Retention Research and Persistence Models

The foundations of persistence and retention models for higher education have been developed from prolific amounts of past research and data analysis. According to Porter (1990) one of the major areas of influence on persistence is the college environment and the student's experience in that environment. The most prominent and commonly used models of institutional effects are Tinto's (1975) academic and social integration model and Astin's (1977) involvement model. In general terms, Tinto's model indicates, holding all else equal, the major determinant of persistence is how well the student is integrated into the college (Porter 1990). Astin's model is related somewhat but not in the same manner. Astin does not stress the need for full integration, but rather involvement. "Students can be alienated in certain campus arenas, but still persist because they have ties in other areas (such as sports, academic, or fraternities /sororities) that provide sufficient involvement to maintain a connection" (Porter 1990, p. 3).

Tinto (1975) produced what is the most widely cited model of the student attrition process and the most widely tested in empirical studies (Bean 1982). In the social system, institutional commitment is expected to produce peer group and faculty interaction, which leads to social integration, which in turn increases institutional commitment. "Institutional commitment is also expected to reduce the likelihood of dropping out" (Bean 1982, p. 21).

The California Community College EOP&S programs have several supportive services that provide opportunities for student integration and involvement. The combination of services mandated by state regulation provides a cross section of activities that attempt to include the key elements of persistence and retention models. More over, the wide variety and combination of EOP&S program services appear to provide several opportunities for integration and involvement from both the academic and social arenas as indicated in student attrition model research. However, a review of literature reveals that, most retention research deals with characteristics of persisters and non-persisters (Brawer, 1996).

Nora (1993), in her review of literature of two-year Colleges and Minority students, found that in line with the theoretical expectations of Pascarella, Smart and Ethington, the two variables with the most consistent pattern of significant positive effects on degree persistence and degree completion were academic and social integration.

More specifically, Nora (1993) indicated that, findings from a comparative study of Black and White students' college achievement by Nettles, Thoeny and Gosman (1986), suggest that, four variables -- SAT scores, student satisfaction, peer relationships, and interfering problems -- have differential predictive validity for Blacks and White students. Moreover, significant racial differences on several predictors (type of high school attended, high school preparation, majority/minority status in college, where students live while attending colleges, academic integration, feelings that the university is racially discriminatory, satisfaction with the university, interfering problems, and study habits) help to explain racial differences in college performance.

Early studies by Pascarella and Terenzini (1977, 1978), based upon Tinto's model, confirm the concept that, students in general do better when they have an opportunity to interact positively with faculty outside the classroom. Tinto's model is the concept that two variables are consistently indicated as significant to retention of students in higher education, and they are academic and social integration. More specifically, Pascarella &

Terenzini (1980) quote Tinto (1975) to articulate the retention model and the Tinto concept. "It is the individual's integration into the academic and social systems of the college that most directly relates to his continuance in that college" (p. 61). In basic terms, Pascarella & Terenzini (1980) indicate that students come to a particular institution with a range of background characteristics (e.g., gender, race, academic ability, secondary performance, family social status) and goal commitment (e.g., highest degree expected, importance of graduating from college). These background characteristics and goal commitments influence, not only, how the student will perform in college, but also how he or she will interact with, and subsequently become integrated into, an institution's social and academic systems (Pascarella & Terenzini 1980).

It is also believed by Pascarella & Terenzini (1980) that, a significant portion of student attrition might be prevented through timely and carefully planned institutional interventions. For example, according to Pascarella & Terenzini (1980), Tinto's model is intended to explain attrition during the second, third, or fourth years of college as well as in the first year, and strongly suggests that attrition is heaviest at the end of the freshman year. In addition, the results generally support the predictive validity of the major dimensions of the Tinto model. Of notable interest, however, were the particularly strong contributions of student-faculty relationships, as measured by the interactions with faculty and the faculty concern for student development and teaching scales, to group discrimination (Pascarella & Terenzini 1980). Similarly Pascarella & Terenzini (1979) found that, high levels of academic integration, such as, frequent informal contacts with faculty focusing on intellectual matters or perceptions of faculty as particularly concerned about teaching and students appeared to compensate for low levels of social and academic integration in other areas. However, implications of the study conducted by Pascarella & Terenzini (1979) titled, 'Interaction Effects in College Dropout Models', suggested that, there may be important determinants of freshman year persistence which are not merely the result of the kinds of students enrolled, but rather are subject to the influence of

institutional policies and programs which affect the student after he or she arrives on campus.

Similarly, research supports the need for multiple-action programs to improve Hispanic student retention. Avalos & Pavel (1993) rely on Walker (1988) to articulate the education environment for most Hispanic college students. Walker (1988) asserts, as mentioned by Avalos & Pavel (1993) that improvements in retention were associated with financial aid grants, career counseling into selective programs, and participation in English as a Second Language (ESL) and Latino studies classes. In addition, Avalos & Pavel (1993) believe that, transfer is often cited as a factor in Latino community college student retention, however, California which has the most Latinos' in the largest system of community colleges in the world, and it experiences the greatest transfer losses among Latino and Black freshman students.

According to Avalos & Pavel (1993), community colleges play a major role in improving the access of Latino students to the American system of higher education. Studies indicate that roughly 56% percent of all college going Latinos' attend community colleges, largely because they are inexpensive, offer pertinent instruction, and have close ties with the community. However, relatively few have attained a Postsecondary degree of any kind, making retention and transfer paramount concerns (Avalos & Pavel 1993). More specifically, two factors seem to influence Latino community college student retention according to Avalos & Pavel (1993); they are financial aid and academic support.

However, Fralick (1993) found that a survey completed at Cuyamaca California Community College shows no significant differences between the success rates of minority and non-minority students. However, one of the college goals is to increase the diversity of student enrollment. It has been found that programs designed to increase retention for the general population are helpful in retaining minority students as well (Fralick 1993).

In addition, Schwartz (1997) alleges that, identifying the special talents of students from diverse backgrounds is just the first step toward helping them achieve their full

potential. Educators need to develop programs for gifted students that reflect and respect their cultures and learning styles. This is concept is also important to minorities, for example, Munoz (1986) contends that, while all students face some stress-provoking situations upon entering higher education, his research has demonstrated that the stress produced is higher for Chicano students, than for Anglo students (Olivas p. 147).

Willard Lewallen conducted a study of Student Equity at Antelope Valley College (AVC) in California where he examined the access and success of what he called historically underrepresented students. The results of the study indicated that for 1990-91 to 1993-94 academic years the following items: (1) while Native Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Black students were over-represented at AVC compared to their representation in the college's service area, Latino students were significantly underrepresented; (2) with respect to degree completion compared to representation in the college population, females were over-represented, while Black and Latino students were underrepresented; and (3) Latino students were also underrepresented in transfer to the state supported four year colleges.

According to Baron (1997) there continues to be a growing concern in college communities for the development of services and programs that meet the personal and developmental needs of students. "This concern runs concurrent with emphasis on instruction and research, recognizing that every student must meet certain basic personal needs in order to function successfully in a learning environment" (Baron p. 6). More specifically, Baron (1997) indicated that a variety of support services with emphasis upon rapid counseling contacts, self-concept development through revised orientation, career development, problem solving and coping skill to enhanced retention and achievement for under-prepared community college students. The Bronx Community College retained 76.5% percent of its high risk under-prepared students who participated in the Freshman outreach, caring, understanding, and support (FOCUS) center compared to 59.3% percent of the non-participant freshman.

Comparison research conducted by Walker (1988) indicated that community college Latino students retention was improved by proportional level of supportive services, specifically: financial Aid, career counseling in selective programs, bilingual education, ESL classes and Latino studies courses.

A 1996 report from the Illinois Community College Board shows the various activities addressing the needs of underrepresented groups that were offered through out the state community colleges system. The level of service was reported along with the level of transfer achievements for Black and Latino students between 1990 and 1994 which accounted for an overall increase of 34% percent for Black student and 42% percent for Latino students (p. 14).

Atondo, et al. (1986) provides research results that highlight the success of Latino students who participate in the Puente (bridge) Project at Evergreen Community College in California. The Puente project integrates the skills of an English teacher, a Latino academic counselor, and other Latino professionals acting as mentors to promote academic achievement, self-confidence, and student motivation. The 3-year comparative study of 115 Puente students and 273 Latino counter parts yielded the following findings: 89% percent of the Puente students completed English 330 compared to 46% percent of the other Latino students; 70% percent of the Puente students completed English 1A, compared to 8% percent of the other Latino students; 53% percent of the Puente students remained enrolled compared to 17% percent of the non-participating Latino students. The overall study demonstrated a significantly higher level of achievement among Puente students as compared to their Latino counterparts.

According to Fink and Carrasquillo (1994) a variety of support services and campus wide retention strategies improved retention. In addition, a study conducted by Windham (1994) indicates that, community college students found to be most likely to remain enrolled were traditional students who were young, not working, not enrolled in preparatory courses, attending full-time, earning high grades. The study also concluded

that the population least likely to persist is also the majority population attending most public community colleges who were working full-time, enrolled part-time, older and minority.

In 1983 Napa Valley community College implemented it's Student Orientation, Assessment, Advisement and Retention (SOAAR) program which consisted of assessment of Math and reading skills of first-time students, orientation and advisement of services and courses. According to Friedlander (1984), participation in the SOAAR program did not have a positive affect on student performance or persistence in Napa Valley Community College English and Math classes.

In contrast, Coll & VonSeggern (1991) assert that empirical studies undertaken at Bronx Community College, Phillips Community College, and Miami-Dade Community College provide evidence that the freshman success course effectively promotes retention. According to Coll & VonSeggern (1991), freshman success courses typically include topics that are highly correlated with academic persistence, such as managing time, memory techniques, writing test answers and course papers, and coping with overload anxiety. More specifically, Coll & VonSeggern (1991) believe that effective per-college orientation programs provide students with the following six informational elements for success:

1. Descriptions of college program offerings.
2. The college's expectations for students.
3. Information about assistance and services for examining student interests, values and abilities.
4. Encouragement to establish working relationships with faculty.
5. Information about services that help their students with adjustment to college.
6. Financial aid information.

The research conducted by Takahata (1993) indicated that the strategies utilized at the Critical Thinking and Writing Center were successful in improving outcomes for at-risk students attending San Diego City College. According to Takahata (1993). Although students in the treatment group were more likely to be classified as being at-risk compared to the comparison groups, they were successful on five specific outcome measures. For example, the students in the treatment group attending the Critical Thinking and Writing Center, had significantly higher retention rate of 96.7% percent compared to 86% percent for the non-treatment group and they exhibited a persistence rate of 91.7% percent compared to 78.7% percent for the non-treatment group. In addition, considering overall retention a research result, Price (1993) suggests increased retention was associated with greater involvement in campus activities, closer affiliation with faculty members, and on-campus employment.

According to Mohammadi (1994), the most significant community college predicators of student retention are student goals, hours enrolled per semester, number of credit hours completed and grade point average. In contrast, Saucedo (1991) concluded that Puente students who received services from Puente English teacher, Puente Counselor and Mentor had a comparatively higher retention level than non-Puente Mexican-American students.

EOP&S Services Toward Student Integration and Involvement

The California Community College EOP&S programs have several supportive services that provide opportunities for student integration and involvement. The combination of services mandated by state regulation provides a cross section of activities that attempt to include the key elements of persistence and retention models. For example, program standards for the EOP&S program embrace the following activities and services:

- Outreach/Recruitment -

- Orientation -

- Registration assistance -
- Mandatory multiple counseling contacts -
- Progress monitoring -
- Basic skills and Special instruction -
- Transition services (Transfer & Career or Job placement) -
- Needs Assessment -
- Tutoring –
- Ethnic diversity staff training -
- Financial Aid Grants -
- Cultural events -
- Child care -
- Book service –
- Peer advising -
- Education plan and goal development (academic advising) -
- Mentoring -
- Single Parent Support groups -

The wide variety and combination of EOP&S program services appear to afford several opportunities for integration and involvement from both the academic and social arenas as indicated in student attrition model research. A review of program performance over several years may support the premise that the EOP&S program enhances the retention and persistence of at-risk community college student populations.

Definitions

The following definitions function as the operational foundation for terminology utilized for this study. The definitions are applied to establish clarity of purpose and common understanding of the nomenclature within this study. In addition, student

performance for the purpose of this study was measured by the following definitions of persistence and retention.

EOP&S: Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOP&S) is a specially funded state student service program, designed to serve low-income educationally disadvantaged community college students. More, specifically, EOP&S is designed to recruit and serve students who are handicapped by social, economic and language barriers.

Persistence: The maintenance of continued enrollment for two or more semesters, specifically from Fall term to Spring term and/or completion of a degree/certificate or transfer to a four-year college.

Retention: The maintenance of continued enrollment in classes throughout one semester. The ratio of units that students successfully-completed to the units attempted.

EOP&S Student characteristics: All EOP&S students are required to be low-income, i.e., having and annual income of less than $16, 000 for a family of four or $7,500 for a single student. In addition, EOP&S students must be educationally disadvantaged, i.e., low college preparation skills, low high school achievements (G.P.A less than 2.5), received remedial or pre-collegiate instruction, be a member of an under-represented ethnic group, first generation college or parents are non-English speakers.

EOP&S Student Performance

In 1991 research Staff at the California Community College Chancellor's office, Charles McIntyre and Dr. Chuen-Rong Chan (1991) conducted a study examining the performance achievements of EOP&S students during Fall 1989 and Spring 1990. This 1989-90 comparison study was conducted with 1,882 EOP&S students and 4,789 non-EOP&S students from similar economic and educational skill levels from 12 different California Community Colleges. The study yielded the following results: when the two populations of EOP&S and Non-EOP&S students were compared on persistence by skill level, EOP&S students yielded a 88.1% percent persistence rate while Non-EOP&S

students yielded a 79.9% percent persistence rate. When the two population were compared on their rate of retention by skill level, EOP&S students yielded a rate of .90% percent compared to .93% percent for Non-EOP&S students of the same skill level. However, when the two populations were compared by socioeconomic status, EOP&S posted a significantly higher persistence rate of 87.2% percent in contrast to a 65.1% percent rate for Non-EOP&S students. The overall results of the 1989-90 study demonstrated that EOP&S students persist at a significantly higher rate than their non-EOP&S counter-parts with the average cumulative GPA's of 2.27 for EOP&S students versus 1.74 for Non-EOP&S students.

Methodology

It is the belief of the researcher that certain aspects of retention and or persistence can be examined and observed through the study of program outcome performance trends over a period of three to four years. Some EOP&S program outcome performance trends may indicate simple success, however further detailed analysis is necessary. Specifically, California Community Colleges management information systems (MIS) data was examined using statewide data collected from four academic years beginning with the Fall term of 1993 and ending Spring term of 1997. The statewide data included two populations of community college students:

1. EOP&S students who were enrolled and served during the specific Fall and Spring terms compared.

2. Non-EOP&S students who were enrolled in 12 or more units during the first 10 Days of the Fall and continued to be enrolled during the subsequent Spring term.

Findings

Current EOP&S program results that have been examined by the researcher continue to indicate significant levels of persistence with high-risk community college

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populations. More specifically, EOP&S statewide data reveals the following performance trends: EOP&S students had a four year average persistence rate of 82.64% percent from the academic years of 1993-94 to 1996-97 in contrast to a 53.95% percent persistence rate for Non-EOP&S students who were enrolled full-time the first ten days of instruction during the Fall terms for the same four years, see charts 1 through 4.

However, the results did not indicate a significant difference in retention rates for the same time period for Non-EOP&S students who were enrolled full-time during any period of the Fall terms and EOP&S students served during the Fall and Spring terms. Specifically, EOP&S student retention outcomes yielded a four-year average of 86.16% percent and Non-EOP&S students yielded an average retention rate of 86.26.

In addition, the academic achievements of the EOP&S program can be analyzed by comparing grade point averages of the two populations, EOP&S and Non-EOP&S. The academic results indicate that EOP&S student's yielded an average GPA of 2.0 or greater for 78.6% percent of the student served in contrast to 81% percent for Non-EOP&S populations.

Cumulative	Average	EOP&S	Cumulative	Average	Non- EOP&S
Below-ave	0<2.0gpa	21.36%	below-ave	0<2.0gpa	18.89%
Average	2.0<2.6	24.75%	average	2.0<2.6	22.36%
Above-ave	2.6<3.0	15.86%	above-ave	2.6<3.0	15.49%
High	3.0 - 4.0	37.98%	high	3.0 - 4.0	43.25%
		100.0%			100.0%

EOP&S GPA
2.0 to 4.0 = 78.64%

Non-EOP&S GPA
2.0 to 4.0 = 81.1%

These performance trend outcomes become more relevant to the realm of college attrition theories and models when we consider the characteristics associated with EOP&S students and the program eligibility, i.e., all EOP&S students are required to be low-income, specifically having and annual income of less than $16, 000 for a family of four or

$7,500 for a single independent student. In addition, EOP&S students must be educationally disadvantaged, i.e., having limited college preparation skills, low high school achievements (G.P.A less than 2.5), received remedial or pre-collegiate instruction, a member of an under-represented ethnic group, first generation college or parents non-English speakers.

The, Fall 1997 Student Expenses and Resources survey (SEARS) conducted by the California Student Aid Commission compiled a series of findings of student opinions. The findings indicated that 86% percent of those who heard of and used EOP&S services were satisfied. In contrast only 75% percent were satisfied with counseling while 76% were satisfied with college orientation and assessment services.

Table 1 **1993-94 Statewide Persistence Data**

	EOP&S	Non-EOP&S
Fall enrollments	64,979	266,545
Spring enrollments =	55,184	145,509
	84.92%	**54.59%**

1994-95 Statewide Persistence Data

	EOP&S	Non-EOP&S
Fall enrollments	68,586	265,114
Spring enrollments =	56,821	142,063
	82.84%	**53.58%**

1995-96 Statewide Persistence Data

	EOP&S	Non-EOP&S
Fall enrollments	66,491	259,126
Spring enrollments =	54,309	139,778
	81.67%	**53.94%**

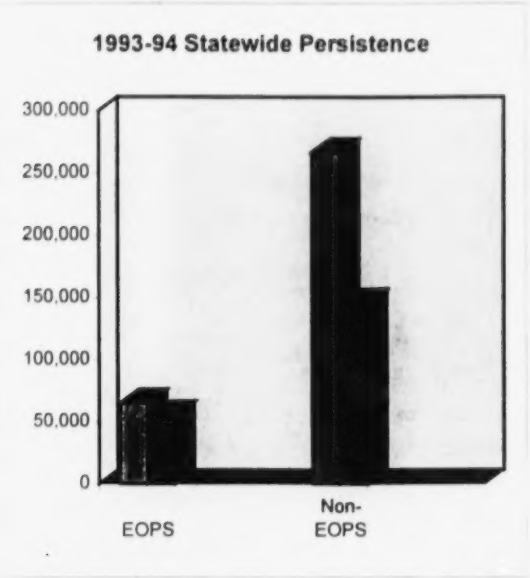
1996-97 Statewide Persistence Data

	EOP&S	Non-EOP&S
Fall enrollments	90,643	262,420
Spring enrollments =	73,524	140,863
	81.11%	**53.67%**

Charts -1- and -2-

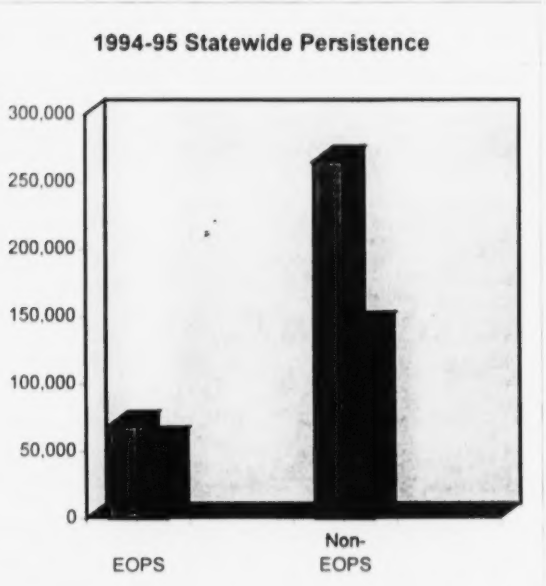
1993-94 Statewide Persistence Data

	EOPS	Non-EOPS
Fall enrollments	64,979	266,545
Spring enrollments =	55,184	145,509
	84.90%	**54.60%**



1994-95 Statewide Persistence Data

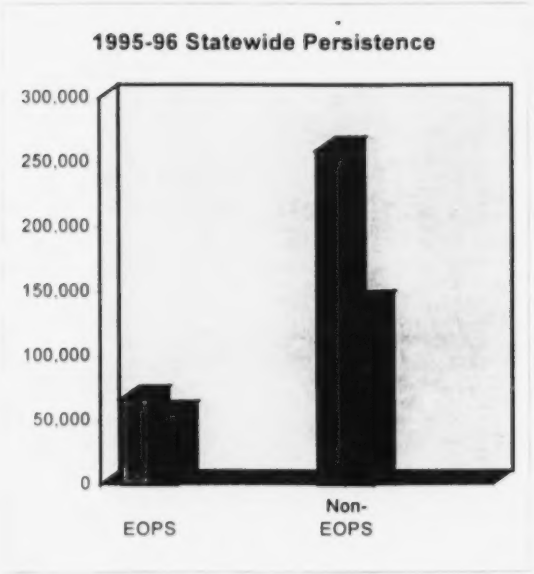
	EOPS	Non-EOPS
Fall enrollments	68,586	265,114
Spring enrollments =	56,821	142,063
	82.80%	**53.60%**



Charts -3- and -4-

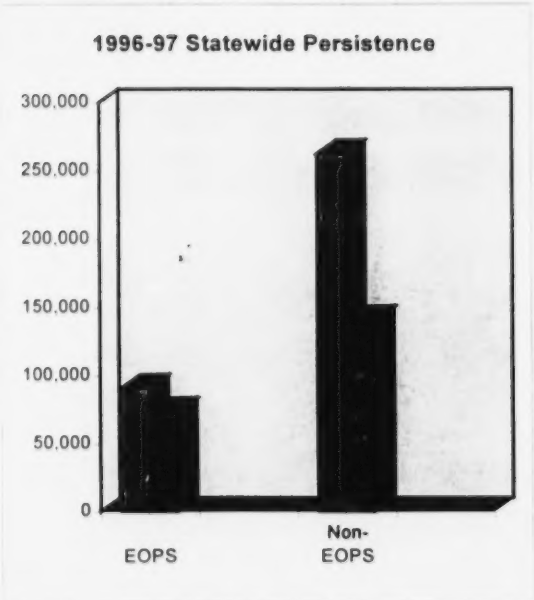
1995-96 Statewide Persistence Data

	EOPS	Non-EOPS
Fall enrollments	66,491	259,126
Spring enrollments =	54,309	139,778
	81.70%	**53.90%**



1996-97 Statewide R Persistence Data

	EOPS	Non-EOPS
Fall enrollments	90,643	262,420
Spring enrollments =	73,524	140,863
	81.10%	**53.70%**



Implications and Conclusion

The implications provided by the results of the EOP&S trend analysis and breath of the research literature relating to retention, reveals a pattern, which ultimately supports the basic model that, Vincent Tinto, has developed for the academy of higher education. The basic premise here suggests that the more students are integrated and/or involved in the college environment, the more they absorb and receive positive experiences from the institution (Tinto 1987, and Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991). However, it is apparent that what we do not know is the details of how to enhance the involvement and integration of disadvantaged minority students in the community college environment on a continual and regular basis.

We must be cognoscente of what specific aspects Tinto (1993) cautioned the academy about concerns that retention programs have helped some students complete their college education, however, their long-term impact on retention has been surprisingly limited, or at least more limited than necessary. Perhaps the most important outcome of retention programs, according to Tinto (1993) is the fact that most retention programs have done little to change the essential quality of the academic experience for most students, especially during the critical first year of college. Kulik, Kulik, & Shwalb (1983), validate Tinto's realistic view of special retention programs. "Although the picture that emerges from the research on these special programs is basically positive, it has some unexpected and even disappointing features. For one thing, effects were stronger in new programs and weaker in institutionalized programs" (p. 408). They speculate that novelty, rather than experience, seemed to be the essential factor in program success. More over, they observed that colleges seemed to be better at setting up special programs for high-risk students than they were at keeping these programs going. According to them energy, enthusiasm, or even funding may have dropped off, as programs become institutionalized. For retention, programs to maintain there positive effect programs efforts must be comprehensive, as indicated by Tinto (1993), Parker (1997) and de Acosta (1996) and

specifically related to the population it is slated to serve, i.e., the community college non-traditional student.

Overall, the studies reviewed earlier indicate that, many in higher education have obtained knowledge pertaining to successful practices and efforts from a variety of colleges, and there are strong indications that most of these practices have a reoccurring theme. The theme is constant throughout the research mentioned and can be summarized in the following five concepts:

- *Students retention is most important in the first 12 months of college.*

- *Students who are significantly involved in the college, e.g., instruction and academics, and/or the social fabric of the college, are retained and do persist.*

- *Disadvantaged students bring different experiences with them to college, than White middle class students do.*

- *Disadvantaged and minority students, who do not perceive themselves to be apart of the college, nor connected to the learning environment or atmosphere of the college, will not persist.*

- *It takes a whole college (it takes a whole village) to retain a student.*

The higher education academy continues to learn and validate how important it is to adapt the college environment, to be supportive, and to be inclusive of at-risk disadvantaged minority students. Tinto (1993) asserts that, in the final analysis, the key to successful student retention lies with the institution, in its faculty and staff, not in any one formula or recipe.

Future Considerations and Recommendations

In this climate of constant attacks upon affirmative action, and the call for more efficient accountability systems, higher education has the opportunity to transform the college learning environment to better retain students. Instead of blaming the student for failing to fit the system, we must design and implement a new structure that provides appropriate educational and related services to those most at risk (The Council of Chief State School Officers, 1987). Now is the time to change the overall approach of higher education institutions, from exclusive education to inclusive education, and to adjust the vision and scope of Postsecondary education to look beyond the open door of access upward and onward toward graduation as the true picture of success for tomorrow's' low-income disadvantaged and minorities. This noble endeavor of access, achievement and accountability becomes ever so important for those, who will soon be the new majority.

Rendon (1994) contends that, "African American, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, American Indian, and Asian Students are emerging as a new student majority on some campuses". The survival of the new majority is predicated upon the transformation of the organizational culture of higher education institution. However, if the transformation of the organizational culture of higher education is not modified in a systematic, comprehensive and timely manner, American may find a myriad of its' higher educational institutions involved in the systematic exclusion of the new majority.

Tinto (1998) proposed that "we should direct our studies to forms of practice and let the knowledge gained from those studies inform our theories of persistence" (p. 175). Therefore, it is imperative that the elements of persistence and retention be examined and revealed to enhance the achievements and success of community college students. To improve the quality of community college education and higher education in general, it is necessary to determine to what extent special support program services affect positive student performance and outcomes, i.e., persistence, retention, and grade-point average or transfer to four-year institutions.

When the community college academy talks about better serving students and academic achievements, it must include in that vision of successful achievements all of it's students. That means the inclusion of students of color, and those of different social and economic classes. More specifically, at-risk students await the open arms of inclusion and acceptance in the academic and social endeavors of the community college and the university. Perhaps the most important aspect of this retention research is the obvious need to rededicate community college priorities to retention and persistence. The California Education code under section 66010.4. titled, "Missions and function of public and independent institutions of higher education" subsection (3) states:

> "The community colleges may conduct to the extent that state funding is provided, institutional research concerning student learning and retention as is needed to facilitate their educational missions."

Let us work together to promote persistence and the retention of community college special populations in California and throughout the nation. Now is the time to conduct further research, highlighting successful persistence and retention models. It is our destiny as educators to facilitate the achievement of student success and go beyond open access to effectively assist all community college students in their endeavor to obtain their educational mission and goals. Retention is the key to facilitating successful educational missions of community college students now and in the future.

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